

Comments to SCCRTC from Barry Scott re: ZEPRT and Trail alignments

From Barry Scott, Aptos resident

Dear Commissioners and staff,

Side clearance recommendations for the rail trail:

The HDR recommendations for 11 and 12-foot clearances differ significantly from the original assumptions that 8.5 feet in each direction was a standard. The resulting 17-foot total space would permit adequate space for our trail as planned, even in a 30-foot right of way. While researching CPUC guidelines for clearances I was contacted by staff in the Rail Safety Division.

Staff clarified that passenger rail operations do not increase required side clearances. General Order 26-D for freight includes the most restrictive rules, that same order mentions clearances for passenger service but if the track is intended for even infrequent freight, the 8.5 foot minimum, 10 foot where practical, and extra foot if the track is curved are the rules.

The HDR specification is not binding, it's only a very safe padded value that can be shaved down in the actual final design and construction of trail segments, including fences, etc.

Read all about 26-D

here: https://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/published/GENERAL_ORDER/59571.htm

Pay close attention to Sections 3, 9, 11, and 12.

Several exceptions have been granted, many of them relating to clearances:

<https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/industries-and-topics/rail-safety/rail-transit-safety/resolutions-granting-rtas-exemptions-from-gos>

The two systems that seem most representative of our project are the San Diego Sprinter and the Arrow, aka Redlands line, both of which use diesel multiple units and temporal separation, and both have comparatively low boarding platforms (just under 24 inches from top of rail). For comparison, the TIG/m streetcar had an 8-inch floor level.

Read about both systems and special conditions on this page:

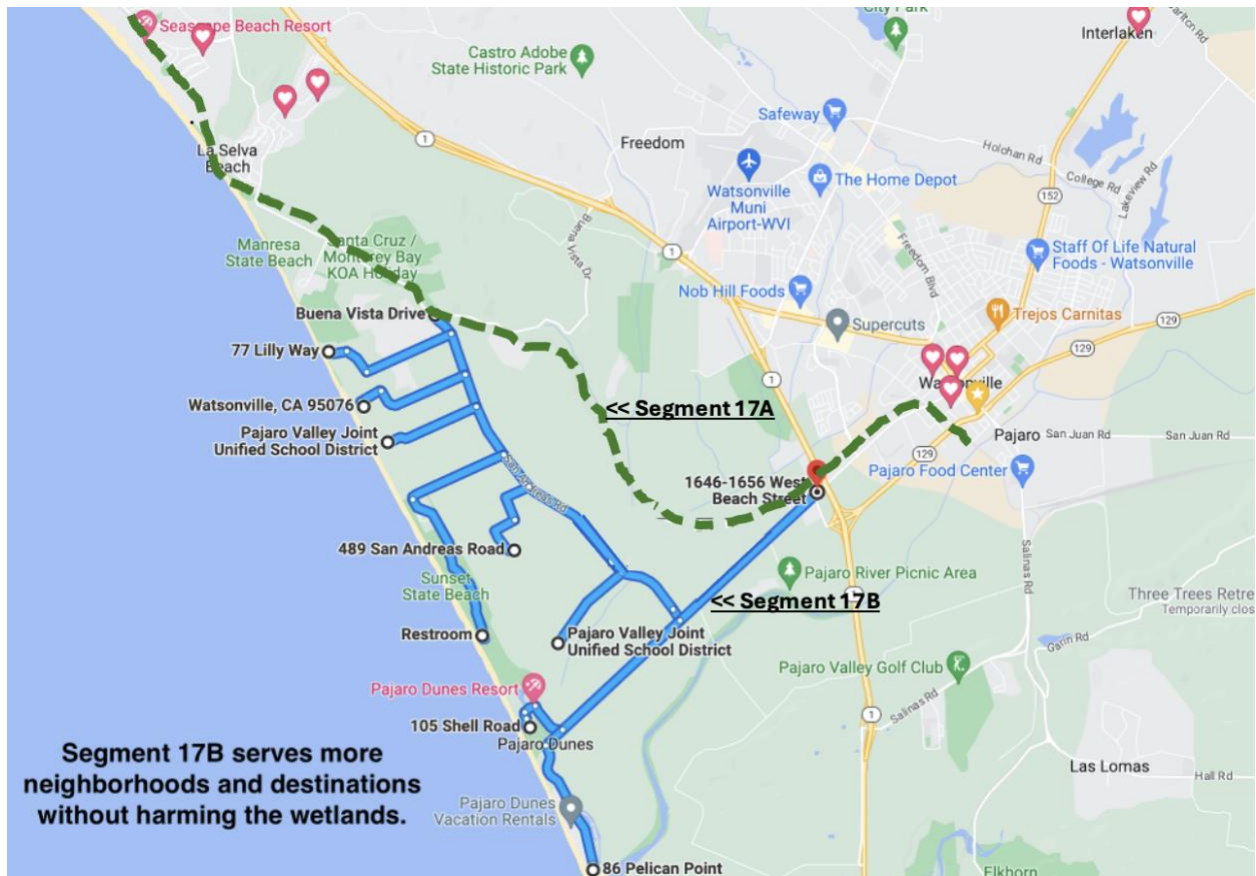
<https://caltrain-hsr.blogspot.com/2024/03/level-boarding-is-legal-in-california.html>

I hope that by the time we get around to ordering vehicles, an acceptable wireless battery or H2 Light Rail Vehicle that fits the requirements will become available, as the Sprinter and the Arrow vehicles are larger and heavier than we need.

Trail alignment alternatives that make rail less problematic:

Segment 17 has two alternatives, 17A and 17B which directs the trail away from sensitive wetlands to a safe buffered or separated bikeway on San Andreas Road and Beach Street.

Alternative 17B connects to far more homes, businesses, beaches, and other destinations along San Andreas Road and Beach St. without competing with the rail project for space.



Other locations that might be better for the trail include Townsend and Sumner in Rio Del Mar and along Park Avenue in Capitola.

The distraction from no-rail proponents prevented planners from considering more sensible alternatives. However, we still have time to consider realignments to streets that improve connectivity while prioritizing rail over trail.

Many thanks to the staff, planners, and Commissioners for your dedicated work.

Barry Scott,
Aptos

From: Ben Vernazza
To: Mitch Weiss; "Robert Tidmore"; Sarah Christensen; "Matt Machado"; manu.koenig@santacruzcounty.us; bruce.mcperson@santacruzcounty.us; gine.johnson@santacruzcounty.us; "Zach Friend"; rpquinn@pacbell.net; eduardo.montesino@cityofwatsonville.org; Felipe.hernandez@santacruzcounty.us; Justin.cummings@santacruzcounty.us; Andy.Schiffirin; openup@cats.ucsc.edu; sbrown@cityofsantacruz.com; "Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson"; Yesenia Parra; Shannon Munz; Regional Transportation Commission; vanessa.quiroz@cityofwatsonville.org; rj12@comcast.net; apedersen@ci.capitola.ca.us; thekristenbrown@gmail.com; Riley Gerbrandt
Subject: June 6 agenda Items 36 37 and forward to OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
Date: Monday, June 3, 2024 6:04:09 PM
Attachments: PLAY BY THE BOOK Final.pdf

JUNE 6 AGENDA ITEMS 36-37 AND FORWARD TO OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

The \$40,.000,000+- estimated cost difference between the Ultimate Trail and the Interim Trail is not allowed by the Ordinance because it is only there for the purpose of allowing room for a TRAIN and this is not permitted by the Ordinance unless amended in accordance with Section 25 of the that Ordinance. Additionally, any legal agreement with Roaring Camp regarding Seg. 9-10- is not permitted by the Ordinance because it is obviously being made for a train on the Ultimate Trail. The only reason for a bond issue is because it is needed to for the Train with an Unsafe Ultimate Trail. The SCCRTC must "Play by the Book!"

See the last and only amendment to the SCCRTC Ordinance in February 2020 and especially page A-5 <https://sccrtc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/MeasureD-ExpenditurePlan.pdf/>

FROM THE AMENDED ORDINANCE (Expenditure Amounts, Expectations, Rules)

"Active Transportation – 17% Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (Coastal Rail Trail) Measure Revenues (17% or approximately \$85 million total) will be allocated for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network, otherwise known as the Coastal Rail Trail, **for people walking and bicycling along the coast in Santa Cruz County. The coastal rail and trail corridor connects Watsonville, Aptos, Capitola, Live Oak, Santa Cruz, and Davenport and links to trails in Monterey County. The trail offers spectacular views of the Monterey Bay, historic trestles, and a flat surface free of automobile traffic. This trail will provide kids, commuters and recreational bicyclists and walkers a safe and enjoyable way to travel. Funds will be used for trail construction, maintenance, operation, management and drainage of the rail and trail corridor and will leverage other state and federal grants for completion of the trail network."**

"Rail Corridor – 8% Infrastructure Preservation and Analysis of Options Eight percent of Measure Revenues (approximately \$40 million total) will be used for **preservation of the Rail Corridor infrastructure** (rail banking?) and analysis of its future potential use to better serve Santa Cruz County residents and visitors. Projects include analysis (including environmental and economic analysis) to answer important community questions about possible future transit and other transportation uses of the corridor through an open, transparent public process; and maintaining and repairing the publicly owned Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line. **The Measure Revenues do not include funding for any new train/rail service. If the Regional**

Transportation Commission determines that the best use of the corridor is an option other than rail transit, funds may be utilized for other transportation improvements along and near the corridor.

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE THE ATTACHED.

J. Ben Vernazza CPA/PFS TEP emeritus
Aptos CA – Ben@BenVCPA.com

RTC MUST “PLAY BY THE BOOK”
ORDINANCE NO. 2016-01 (A Quick-Check)
J. Ben Vernazza, Aptos CA

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) is bound by specific regulations and limitations, even with a unanimous vote. This document provides a concise overview of Santa Cruz County Ordinance No. 2016-01, as amended in 2020, highlighting what the RTC can and cannot do. For a more comprehensive understanding, please refer to the full ordinance at <https://sccrtc.org/funding-planning/measured/> under "Quicklinks."

HERE IS WHAT THE VOTERS SAW ON THEIR BALLOTS Election” Safety, Pothole Repair, Traffic Relief, Transit Improvement Measure. In order to: improve children’s safety around schools; repair potholes; repave streets; improve traffic flow on Highway 1; maintain senior/disabled transit; reduce global warming pollution by providing transportation options like sidewalks, buses, bike lanes, trails; preserve rail options; shall Santa Cruz County voters adopt an ordinance establishing a half-cent sales tax for 30 years, raising approximately \$17 million annually, YES ____ NO ____” (Comment *Rail-Banking)*

Section 8.IMPLEMENTATION B. The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission, which currently allocates, administers regional transportation projects and programs, in its role as the Authority shall allocate, administer, and oversee the expenditure of all Measure Revenues which are not directly allocated by formula annually to other agencies, consistent with the Expenditure Plan, as it may be amended The implementation Plan may be amended by a majority vote of the Authority; however, amendment of the Implementation Plan shall not serve to amend provisions of the Expenditure Plan.

Section 24 AMENDMENTS. Other amendments to this Ordinance shall require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the total membership of the Authority. AND Section 25.EXPENDITURE PLAN UPDATES AND AMENDMENTS.

A. This Ordinance and Expenditure Plan may be amended to provide for the use of additional federal, state, and local revenues, to account for unexpected revenues, or to take into consideration unforeseen circumstances. Should a project implementing agency determine that a planned project has become undeliverable and unfeasible due to circumstances unforeseen at the time this Ordinance and Expenditure Plan were created, or should a project not require all funds programmed for that project or have excess funding, funding set forth at project termination will be reallocated to another project or program of the same type or otherwise serving the same objectives.

B. The Ordinance and Expenditure Plan may only be amended, if required, by the following process set forth in Section 180207 of the Public Utilities Code: (1) Initiation of amendments by the Authority reciting findings of necessity; (2) Provision of notice and a copy of the amendments provided to the Board of Supervisors and the City Councils in Santa Cruz County; (3) The proposed amendments shall become effective 45 days after notice is given. Amendments shall require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the total membership of the Authority.

Section 32. TAXPAYER SAFEGUARDS, AUDITS, AND ACCOUNTABILITY. A. Annual Report. B. Annual Audit. C. Independent Oversight Committee. The responsibilities of this Committee include Reviewing Expenditure Plan expenditures on an annual basis to ensure they conform to the Ordinance. Reviewing the annual audit and report prepared by an independent auditor [who must report under NOCLAR (Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations) with a footnote in their report]. .

Exhibit A: Expenditure Plan and Summary of Transportation Investments per cent of funds. 2016 Transportation Improvement Plan - Expenditure Plan as amended 2020.

SUMMARY OF TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT

ALLOCATIONS:

<i>CITIES AND COUNTIES</i>	<i>30%</i>
<i>HIGHWAY CORRIDORS</i>	<i>25%</i>
<i>METRO & LIFT LINE</i>	<i>20%</i>
<i>MONTEREY BAY SCENIC TRAIL</i>	<i>17%</i>
<i>RAIL CORRIDOR OPTION STUDIES</i>	<i>8%</i>

VERY SIGNIFICANT → INFRASTRUCTURE: *The Measure Revenues do not include funding for any new train/rail service.* *If the Regional Transportation Commission determines that the best use of the corridor is an option other than rail transit, funds may be utilized for other transportation improvements along and near the corridor.*

WHAT THE RTC CANNOT DO BUT MUST DO:

Two critical safety issues must be addressed. First, any modifications near New Brighton Beach must comply with California Coastal Commission regulations. Second, the Coastal Corridor Master Plan mandates a Class 1 bike and pedestrian trail that adheres to accessibility requirements outlined in the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) guidelines, ensuring ADA compliance.

Based on conversations with the DIR and peak usage data estimated between Santa Cruz and Capitola, a 16-foot or wider trail with separate lanes for bikes

and pedestrians is preferable. Shared trails narrower than 14 feet are unlikely to meet accessibility standards. Therefore, submitting detailed schematics to the DIR's Accommodation Division for review is crucial before seeking approval from the California Transportation Commission.

Failing to comply with these requirements could result in costly modifications, as demonstrated by the Daubert v. National Park Service (Yosemite) case. This court case had a simple ending –“**modify the trail**”. It is imperative that the SCCRTC prioritizes accessibility and safety by following established procedures.

FAILURE TO ACT COULD COST US MILLIONS MORE!

J. Ben Vernazza Aptos CA

From: [JT Rueppel](#)
To: [Regional Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: Comments for passenger rail presentation
Date: Tuesday, June 4, 2024 2:43:10 PM

Hello,

I'd like to provide a comment for the upcoming RTC meeting on passenger rail. My comment is this:

Please choose the EMU option with overhead catenary/overhead wires. Please DO NOT choose the hydrogen or battery electric option. If the RTC wants to choose a truly zero-emission rail service, hydrogen is NOT the correct option. Not only is it an unproven alternative to overhead wire, diesel, and natural gas, hydrogen requires itself to be trucked in for refueling which is not only expensive long term, but not zero-emission (transport trucks run off diesel). Hydrogen is extremely inefficient when being stored, and extremely expensive to purchase long term. The logistics of installing high pressure tanks for fueling is impractical and expensive. It was a mistake of Caltrans to consider/purchase hydrogen trains, and it will be a mistake for Santa Cruz County to do the same.

Catenary/overhead wire EMU is not only the most widely used option in the world for rail service (and therefore the most inexpensive to operate long term), it is the most efficient and clean method of creating passenger rail service. While the biggest challenge with installing and purchasing catenary/overhead wire EMU's is the larger cost upfront, they are cheaper to maintain and operate over time.

Thank you

From: [Matt Farrell](#)
To: [Regional Transportation Commission](#); thekristenbrown@gmail.com; manu.koenig@santacruzcounty.us; apedersen@ci.capitola.ca.us; [Andrew Schiffrin](#); [Justin Cummings](#); bruce.mcpherson@santacruzcounty.us; [Larry Pageler](#); mike.rotkin@cityofsantacruz.com; sbrown@cityofsantacruz.com; [Quiroz-Carter Vanessa](#); [Donna Lind](#); eduardo.montesino@cityofwatsonville.org; [Eduardo Montesino](#); robertpquinn1@gmail.com
Subject: FORT Comment Letter on RTC June 6 Agenda Items 36 and 37
Date: Tuesday, June 4, 2024 6:07:24 PM
Attachments: [RTC Agenda 06062024 Comment Letter Items 36 and 37.docx](#)

Chair Brown and Commissioners,

The attached letter contains FORT's comments on Items 36 and 37 for the Thursday, June 6 RTC agenda.

In summary, FORT supports staff's recommendation for item 36. For item 36, we are not commenting because there is insufficient information for comment, which we have addressed in detail in our letter.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these items; and for your service to our community,

Matt Farrell
Board Chair, Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail and Trail (FORT)
831 331-7496



June 4, 2024

Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
1101 Pacific Avenue, Suite 250
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Subject: FORT comments for RTC meeting June 6th, 2024.
Item 36: Support for Staff Recommendation
Item 37: Insufficient information for Comment

Chair Brown and Commissioners,

Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail & Trail (FORT) is a local, non-profit community organization that advocates for expanding Santa Cruz County's transportation system to include passenger rail service and a 32-mile multi-use trail as detailed in the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Master Plan. We offer the following comments on this week's RTC agenda. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on Items 36 and 37.

Agenda Item 36:

FORT appreciates staff's continuing efforts to create a roadmap for the use of the 2016 Measure D Active Transportation Category funds. FORT supports the staff recommendation to continue to identify funding opportunities to advance trail segments 13-20. As the county's oldest advocacy group for creation of the trail along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, we look forward to working with commissioners and the public to develop this important project. We have consistently supported all grant applications for trail and rail funding; and appreciate the opportunity to be a partner in these efforts, which have been very successful.

FORT also fully supports near term planning for segment 17B along San Andreas Road rather than 17A through the sloughs. In addition to the benefit of reduced cost, 17B will have reduced impact on sensitive environments, increase neighborhood access to the trail network, and provide safe, paved, active transportation access from Watsonville to nearby beaches. Our support for the 17B alignment assumes that the trail will be a high-quality multimodal trail that is separated from traffic by a barrier, **not** simply a standard bike lane with fresh paint. This trail segment can and must offer and provide the same excellent design quality as all the other Coastal Rail Trail segments.

Finally, we are happy to support identifying near term funding for projects in Watsonville, including the use of discretionary funds, to develop the remainder of segment 18.

Agenda Item 37:

FORT supports a process that allows more informed comments on project team proposals for the zero emission passenger rail transit project. FORT, as an organization, and the public are unable to make any informed comments on this item because insufficient information has been provided in advance of the meeting.

In the future, we request that staff provide detailed, specific project information and meeting materials for public hearings prior to the meeting so that stakeholders and interested parties can engage fully and thoughtfully with the process. In order to understand why a certain choice has been recommended, the background and criteria for that choice need to be described and explained. This way the public hearing process will focus on inclusion, communication, understanding, problem solving and will result in successful project development/definition.

Thank you again for your consideration.

Matt Farrell

Chair, Santa Cruz County Friends of the Rail and Trail (FORT)

From: [Bob F](#)
To: [Regional Transportation Commission](#)
Cc: [zach.friend@santacruzcounty.us](#); [manu.koenig@santacruzcounty.us](#); [bruce.mcpherson@co.santa-cruz.ca.us](#); [eduardo.montesino@cityofwatsonville.org](#); [openup@cats.ucsc.edu](#); [openup@ucsc.edu](#); [sbrown@cityofsantacruz.com](#); [Fred Keeley](#); [thekristenbrown@gmail.com](#); [Justin Cummings](#); [Mitch Weiss](#); [Matt Machado](#); [Sarah Christensen](#); [felipe.hernandez@santacruzcounty.us](#); [rj12@comcast.net](#); [mhartman@SantaCruzSentinel.com](#); [2045 RTP](#)
Subject: Consider Part Of The Solution
Date: Tuesday, June 4, 2024 5:28:17 PM

What would Bart be if it were degraded to only a single track?

If it is as simple as lobbyists for the train industry claim, why wasn't the non-circular BART only a single track that would have saved taxpayers millions? Why are these "experts" introducing the need for excessive critical timed "sidings" and numerous other concerns that make a proposed Trail AND Rail system more flawed than the "unsinkable" Titanic? (Who hasn't experienced a computer "crash" and temporarily lost information which can be replaced/re-sent. We don't need another head-on train crash and lose another 57 passengers who cannot be replaced!)

Everyone experienced with safe train configurations that require more than one train to be running in opposite directions at the same time on the same track, knows that there will be pressure to replace the so called "adjacent" trail with a second track. As an engineer ("retired") with a patent for an All-Express Passenger Train system, I am 100% certain that squeezing in both a Trail AND Train in our limited width single-track corridor environment would be a mistake!

(Not everyone is being fooled by greedy opportunists with excess profits over a people priority. Billionaire Theranos founders found themselves in prison after the real world exposed truths!)

It also cannot be emphasized enough:

<1> cars have exclusive use of freeways

<2> pedestrians should have exclusive use of sidewalks

Bicyclists should not have to decide between riding upon sidewalks or worrying about being the next victim on a distracted driver's bumper! It is frustrating to so many to realize that the best outcome of a for-profit group who is endlessly delaying the implementation of common sense in their focus to divert taxpayer funds into their own pockets, will be resuscitating a long ago defunct single-track system that was intended over 100 years ago for only slow-moving freight and twice a day tourist train. (These functions will be better handled by more efficient means that also put costs for such activity where it belongs which is upon these for-profit organizations, not upon naive

taxpayers.)

Santa Cruz should be welcoming tourists, not discouraging them. More efficient activities also encourage repeat visits by tourists, rather than a perception of being gouged by high-cost ridership and having to unnecessarily wait in another line for an extra change of seats on what should have been simple outings.

Imagine if the growing popularity of the unbeatable convenient and environmentally favorable EBikes (with their 30 MPH capability and ease to enter and exit the corridor at any intersection 24/7) could finally have a safe means of traversing across much of Santa Cruz County (at whatever pace is wanted by participants)! Being part of the solution rather than part of the problem should be appreciated by realizing the possibility that for every active bike, trike or those seen on foot, there could be one less car on the nearby roadways.

Lobbyists for the train lobby / greedy opportunists have been spreading misleading information for years. Please see "Freight Train To Nowhere" in the 11/16/18 issue of the Watsonville Pajaronian which notes the unscrupulous group saturating our community with major deception.

Our local government can save taxpayers endless millions (and lives as well as improving Quality of Life for so many) by implementing the Interim Trail. The Interim Trail is the best way to achieve a safe Bikeway, Walkway, and Runway (jogway) 24/7. (As well as being open to ANY mass transportation means in ANY future.) Perhaps this can be the best use of the Transportation Corridor that runs across much of Santa Cruz County until a means is found to safely transport people from where they are to where they want to be at the speed of light at any time of any day at no cost.

Bob Fifield
Aptos